

Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) Advisory Group Meeting #6
Thursday, April 28, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Crowne Plaza Hotel
901 N Fairfax Street – Roosevelt Room

April 28, 2016 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING NOTES

FINAL

HOUSEKEEPING

- A. OTN SAP Advisory Group Meeting #5 Notes:** The Summary Meeting Notes for Advisory Group Meetings #5 were finalized with no edits and will be uploaded, as final, onto the OTN SAP Update webpage.
- B. April 30th Coalition for Smarter Growth Tour of OTN:**
City Staff informed the Advisory Group of a Coalition for Smarter Growth OTN Tour planned for Saturday, April 30th (10:00AM to Noon), starting from Washington and Pendleton Streets. The tour is free and open to the public.
- C. [Old Town North Community Partnership](#) Farmers Market Announced** - Staff announced that a Farmers Market sponsored by the Old Town North Community Partnership will be taking place in the Montgomery Park parking lot at Montgomery and Royal Streets every Thursday, 3-7:00PM, and will extend from spring to fall. *Margaret Townsend, President of the Partnership and Jack Browand, RPCA, were congratulated on working together over the past 5 years to plan and achieve this service for the community.*
- D. [Advisory Group Standing Meeting and Special Events Schedule](#) (April – June 2016):**
Upcoming meetings and special events of the Advisory Group include:
1. [May 12, 2016, 7:00-9:00PM OTN SAP Update Community Meeting](#)
(*Crowne Plaza*) – Free parking behind 801 N. Fairfax Street (Royal Thai Restaurant) and free onsite child care.
 2. May 26, 2016, 7:00–9:00PM OTN SAP Advisory Group Meeting #7
(*Crowne Plaza*)

REPORT OUT FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Subcommittee Co-Chairs Maria Wasowski and Scott Barstow reported out on the progress made by the subcommittee and staff to-date in examining transportation and environmental related concepts. This work is summarized in the attached [presentation](#) from the April 13th Subcommittee Meeting.

For transportation, Co-Chair Maria Wasowski reported the following:

- Light Transit – The cost associated with use of the rail tracks for light transit does not make it an attractive and viable option at this point in time. Additionally, there are questions as to whether connections in the Braddock area are possible and whether ridership is such that it would meet that and other criteria for federal financial help. Additionally, the same was found for a rapid bus service, leaving the alternative for the time being as expansion of local bus or trolley service to achieve the goal of improved connectivity within OTN and between OTN and other surrounding communities and Metro Stations.
- Rail banking – Staff has learned that Norfolk Southern does own the part of the rail corridor that is within OTN but says it is unlikely that it will become available for rail banking consideration until NRG completes its decommissioning process. Rail banking is a process to gain temporary use of the corridor for recreational and trail related improvements. Staff will continue to track the NRG process and will remain in contact with Norfolk Southern in pursuit of the rail banking option. Norfolk Southern has indicated that rail banking of the tracks could be a possibility as it does not anticipate long term use of the tracks.
- Green Streets – Staff is pursuing the greening of Royal Streets, Second Street and Wythe Street as part of the streetscape improvements. Such green related street improvements are part of the green infrastructure tool box which can possibly include: (1) bioswales; (2) rain gardens; (3) planter boxes, (4) permeable pavement; (5) rainwater harvesting; (6) green roofs; and (7) expanding the tree canopy. General streetscape improvements include such tools as: (1) widening the sidewalks; (2) lighting; (3) sidewalk and street pavement treatment options; (5) bump outs; (6) landscaping; (7) addressing blank walls and surface parking; and (8) activating building frontages, etc.
- Two Way Conversions – Montgomery is mentioned as a possible conversion from one way to two way and Madison is being mentioned as an enhanced bicycle facility. The Subcommittee indicated that it is not prepared to recommend a street conversion at this time and will defer a recommendation pending the Transportation Study that is upcoming. The proposal for an enhanced bicycle facility for Madison is still being developed but no recommendation was made on that either. In addition to a green street,

Royal Street is also being proposed as a neighborhood bikeway, but not with bike lanes. It would include some possible traffic calming measures which are still under study.

Co-Chair Scott Barstow reported on the Eco-District proposal idea to facilitate such sustainability measures as energy renewable use, green infrastructure and green building on a district wide basis. He indicated that the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) supports the idea. As a follow-up to this idea which was generated during Phase I of the planning process, the City is now seeking consulting services for an Eco-District Study as part of the OTN planning effort. EPC has provided some comments and recommendations in a letter for consideration during the study process. The letter was distributed at the meeting and is also on the OTN SAP Update webpage [here](#). The OTN SAP Eco-District Study is anticipated to get underway in late spring with a preliminary update during the mini-Charrette tentatively scheduled for late June.

Comment: Likes the emissions reduction idea expressed in the EPC letter and also would like the City not to eliminate consideration of light rail in the long term. With the anticipated reduction in car use, it is something that should remain on the radar screen.

REPORT OUT FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Subcommittee Chair David Speck referenced the Old Town North Retail and Commercial Panel Discussion in which Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and several Real Estate Brokers participated, namely a Commercial Broker, a Retail Broker and an Asset Manager. The Panel Discussion was held on April 20, 2016, as the second Economic Development Subcommittee meeting. The Subcommittee Chair indicated that a [presentation](#) of demographic information for Old Town North and several surrounding communities was given, followed by a facilitated discussion of key challenges and opportunities in the OTN retail and commercial markets. He further indicated that key thoughts from the Panel Discussion are summarized in [notes](#) from the event. The goal of this Panel Discussion was to begin generating information to help shape a Retail and Commercial Strategy for the Old Town North community. The information from the Panel Discussion and Presentation will leverage additional information to be generated through an ongoing Alexandria Commercial Retention and Office Conversion Study and through additional insights and ideas on how to strategically strengthen and sustain the economics of the area in a way that is responsive to the needs of the community, the adjacent catchment area, and Alexandria overall.

Comment – Cost of retail per square foot is higher than can be supported here. Explore if proffers can be used to help support retail.

REPORT OUT ON THE ARTIST HOUSING TOURS

The Department of Housing staff gave an overview of the two Advisory Group-sponsored Artist Housing Field Trips. The first field trip was held on Monday, April 18th to visit two sites in Baltimore; [Artists' Housing Incorporated](#), a cooperative artist housing formed in 1987, and the [City Arts](#) artist housing which was developed by Homes for America in partnership with Jubilee

Baltimore and TRF Development Partners. The second tour was held on Tuesday, April 26th to visit the [Mount Rainier Artist Lofts](#) in Mount Rainier, MD and the [Brookland Artspace Lofts](#) in Washington, D.C., both of which were developed by [Artspace](#), a non-profit organization. Staff highlighted some impressions that were shared during the tours related to affordable housing and artist housing in particular such as:

1. The importance of identifying champions and coordinating advocacy to foster opportunities for affordable housing such as artist housing
2. Artist housing can help facilitate creative place making and strategic branding for a community
3. Partnerships and education are key tools that can help facilitate affordable housing including artist housing
4. Artist housing in particular often combines the livable space with elements of community space (similar to how OTN wants to add more internal/external community space to housing sites)
5. As the City looks at ways to retain commercial sites while also identifying where conversion of office to residential may be more practical, perhaps there are opportunities for affordable housing, including artist housing, under a conversion policy

Advisory Group and Public Discussion on Artist Housing

Comment: Very glad that you are looking into this. It is an idea that I mentioned at the beginning of the process recognizing that it can help support culture and arts, and art institutions, such as the Art League, in this area.

Comment: Those four artist housing projects are all located in revitalization areas; however, OTN is a different market. Strategies to implement artist housing in OTN will need some tailoring.

Question: The artist housing is a great idea; however, not clear on implementation. Will it be developed using grants from community or development rights? **Response:** Typically, one third of affordable housing costs is financed using conventional private loans, one third or less using the local government loans and one third comes from philanthropy grants. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit program attracts developers to build affordable housing. Developer contributions can also be used to secure loans for affordable housing. Also, City incentives including Density Bonus is another tool. **Additional Response:** This planning effort could also look at regulatory incentives to promote key principles and goals of this Update such as art and cultural related uses, affordable housing, retail and commercial uses, and onsite streetscape improvements. An example is the Planning and Housing Subcommittee has already recommended to the Advisory Group as one of their findings that consideration be given to allow a density bonus for affordable housing of 30%, rather than 20%, in this planning area. Such incentives in general can be addressed as we further our discussion of the planning, land use and housing development analysis for OTN.

OLD TOWN NORTH DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH ANALYSIS

The Department of Planning and Zoning staff gave a [presentation](#) summarizing the process which it is pursuing to achieve projections for an OTN Development and Growth Analysis. Staff summarized the sites in the planning area which already have proposals or approvals, sites which are able to redevelop under current zoning, and sites which may likely redevelop if rezoned to address height or other zoning requirements. Those which may likely redevelop if rezoned could help achieve some noted principles and goals such as affordable housing, a balanced mix of uses including retail, and streetscape and urban design enhancements (See page 4 of the presentation).

Advisory Group and Public Discussion on Text Amendment to CDX zone to increase Allowed Residential Density

Staff indicated that there are several portions of the planning area which are zoned CDX. CDX has a limit on residential density in the planning area except on two blocks off Royal Street. The others portions of the planning area that are zoned CDX are limited in terms of residential density such as portions of N. Washington Street, N. St. Asaph Street, a site on N. Pitt Street and a site on N. Royal Street. Staff inquired about thoughts the Advisory Group might have about increasing the residential density on sites where it is currently limited.

Comment: Do not want to encourage residential development in commercial areas because residential use does not increase the tax base for the City. Also, Washington Street is a transit corridor which will mean a lot of traffic in front of residents' doors.

Comment: The benefit of development on Washington Street on the short to mid-term is that you get a more beautified environment. On the other hand, residential along that transit corridor might not be safe for children.

Comment: Significant redevelopment on Washington Street is currently residential. We should be thinking about the idea of Washington Street as a Gateway and keep in mind the function of the street.

Staff Comment: The character of the whole corridor is still subject to Washington Street Standards and The Old and Historic District (OHAD) Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The maximum height on Washington Street will remain at 50 feet.

Comment: The redevelopment of gas stations involves a lot of environmental issues which makes them very expensive to redevelop. This will drive who will be able to afford to do it.

Comment: The current market for office calls for larger spaces and floor plates. Will these sites meet current demand for office footprint? **Response:** City Staff can model those sites to find out if office spaces would be feasible.

Comment: Economics will be a major driver for redevelopment along Washington Street.

Comment: How do these concepts tie into the principles what were generated during the Charrette? **Response:** Page 4 of today's presentation begins to address that but also, at the next Community Meeting on May 12, we will be looking at the findings from the Subcommittee meetings and how they relate to the Framework Plan that came out of the Charrette.

Question: A question was asked during the Public Hearing for the Edens project on whether the project is consistent with the OTN SAP. **Response:** The Development Special Use Permit (SUP) process involves negotiations with the developer in order to achieve related and germane goals and benefits for the community and City.

COORDINATION OF SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS

City staff reported it has begun compiling findings from the subcommittees' meetings into a matrix that beings to identify commonalities between the different topical areas discussed at those meetings and it identifies where additional work or studies are anticipated. Staff asked the Advisory Group to review the document and send their comments by Thursday, May 5th. The work of the subcommittees will be discussed further at the May 12th OTN SAP Community Meeting.

Advisory Group Attendance – Meeting of April 28, 2016

- Maria Wasowski, Chair (Planning Commission and Transportation Commission)
- Scott Barstow (Environmental Policy Commission Representative)
- Chip Carlin (Board of Architectural Review – Old & Historic District)
- Elizabeth Chimento (Community Representative)
- Herbert J. (Herb) Cooper-Levy (Community Representative - At Large)
- Stephen Goodman (HOA/Community Representative)
- Carolyn Griffin (Community Representative)
- Bruce Machanic (Business Representative)
- Carlos Mejias (Business Representative)
- Jesse O'Connell (Park and Recreation Commission Representative)
- Thomas Soapes (Community Representative - NOTICe)
- David Speck (Alexandria Economic Development Partnership Representative)
- Jeff Strup (Property Owner Representative)
- Marie McKenney Tavernini (Urban Design Advisory Committee)
- Christa Watters (Community Representative – Homeowner Associations/At-Large)